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SPEECH
OF
ARTHUR W. AUSTIN,
OF WEST ROXBURY,
AT
CHARLESTOWN, MASS., NOV. 1, 1856.

25/10

MR. CHAIRMAN :

It is a long time since I have had the pleasure and honor of appearing before the citizens of my native town. I do not feel that I am here a stranger, and I am without embarrassment; for in addition to the brilliant artificial light that illumines, I see one more brilliant still, in the light of the countenances of those around and before me, who in all emergencies—in all times of trial, I have ever known to be true to their country.

I do not intend to address you upon any matters merely local, nor do I deem it necessary to urge you to vote for Mr. BUCHANAN—for you have sense enough to do that without any recommendation from me. And I should hardly have alluded to that gentleman, had I not wished publicly to thank a Delegate from this District to the Cincinnati Convention (Capt. W. W. PIERCE), for his sense, courage and manliness, though holding office under the present Administration, in maintaining, from first to last, in the Convention, the superior claims of JAMES BUCHANAN to the Presidency of these United States. Friends and Fellow-Citizens, it is of your Country I intend to speak.

And here let me ask you what people ever possessed a country with such great natural and acquired advantages, as we enjoy? It is a country in which we may well take pride. The only spot where Freedom hath found a peaceful refuge,—the only place on Earth where the spirit of Liberty walks free and uncontrolled.

We have a climate delightful and varied, — equal in all and superior in many respects, to that of any other land. A broad ocean separates us from the distresses, the contaminations and the corruptions of Europe.

Our mountains and our valleys, — our hillsides and our plains, are filled with luxuriant beauty, — are teeming with life and verdure; throughout our vast domain is the busy hum of industry and honorable and peaceful labor, and in time of harvest our fields are burdened with the bounties of nature. Great are our facilities of communication, through an almost illimitable region; we possess a new Ophir at one extremity of the Union; the waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific wash our shores. In our western country are magnificent lakes, dense forests, rolling prairies, with vast streams forever flowing and which will forever flow, fertilizing the soil and affording abundant opportunity to the husbandman to transport wheresoever he will the rich and varied blessings of a generous autumn.

In addition to our great natural advantages to crown "the circle of our felicities" we have an organic law, — a political, a social compact, which places us pre-eminent over all the other nations of the Globe, — a glorious Constitution, which binds us together as one people. That Constitution we are bound to uphold. Something less than a century ago, there was a country under the dominion of a British King, known as the third George of England. After a long protracted, and distressing war, he lost the brightest jewels of his crown. Sometime after that, a Tory of the Revolution — for they had *Tories* then, as we have *traitors* now — sent the monarch a barrel of our American apples to console him for the loss of a world. The king had never seen such apples, — the soil of England cannot produce them, — the sun of England cannot ripen them. Turning one over in his hand, reflections of the past doubtless thronging in his mind, tradition reports that he exclaimed in an undertone "the country that produced this was worth fighting for." And so our fathers thought, that such a country as this was worth fighting for; and when success gladdened their arms, they thought it worth preserving.

We all know how they sought to secure to their posterity the rights and liberties they had achieved; their success is told, in our record of unexampled prosperity, in our career of uninterrupted glory.

Is there any reason that under the compact our fathers formed, that

we should not live together in peace and harmony? If it ever has been our policy as a nation to maintain friendly relations with all foreign countries, how much more eminently does it become us to preserve harmony, peace and good fellowship with those who are bound together with us in this vast republican empire!

I propose to make brief enquiry as to our relations with some of the other States of the Union.

Sir, we have frequently heard the cry, that there was a disposition on the part of our brethren at the South, to make aggressions upon the North, in defiance of the Constitution under which we live. After careful examination, I, a citizen of the United States, residing in Massachusetts, standing on Northern ground, emphatically deny that there is any foundation for the charge. I claim simple justice for the South, and assert simple truth when I say, that the South as a body has never consented to anything derogatory to the North, has never interfered with the rights of the North, or in the domestic or municipal affairs of the North, either before or since the adoption of the Constitution. If there have been aggressions, they have been made by the North, and the South has either acquiesced, or acted simply in the defensive. And it must be conceded on all hands, that the South has ever manfully maintained the honor of our whole country, in the cabinet and in the field. It was the firmness of Southern statesmen that brought the war of 1812 to a successful issue; it was the heroism of a Southern warrior on the plains of New Orleans that closed that war in a blaze of glory, and left our flag proudly flying on the battlements; our national honor untarnished, and our national glory undimmed.

But let us go back and trace history up, and set history right! In the year 1783, before the formation of the present Constitution, Virginia, one of the Southern or Slave States, had included in her patent, all the North-west Territory, and at the desire or suggestion of the then Federal Congress, freely, without consideration, she made cession of her right thereto, and as it is expressed in the act of cession, "for the common benefit of the Union." In 1787, still before our Constitution, an Ordinance was proposed, said to be drafted by Northern hands, by which Slavery was to be forever excluded from the whole of the territory which Virginia had ceded for the "common benefit of the Union."

This Ordinance, known as the Ordinance of 1787, was passed, and to the eternal honor of Virginia, she assented by legislative action to

the terms thereof, thereby excluding her own planters from a chance of colonizing the very territory she once had owned, and which she had yielded for the "common benefit." Does this look like aggression? She was not called upon to assent to her own exclusion, but her course has ever been marked by generosity. When our Constitution was formed, all the States being put on equality, this Ordinance was virtually abrogated; but no attempts have ever been made by Virginia or the South to interfere with any part of this territory, which was suffered to grow up and be settled by the North. Already five large Free States have been formed from the territory that Virginia freely gave, — Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, — containing in themselves about four times as many square miles as there are in all New England. And the sons and daughters of New England, and the sons and daughters of the North, have for more than half a century revelled in this rich inheritance; and in the territory ceded by Virginia are still uncounted and uncountable acres for the Northern colonist to enjoy, for centuries yet to come. And if so disposed, Virginia might have insisted that the whole territory should be erected into one State, and then there would have been but two United States Senators, instead of the ten at present; but, without narrowness, and with forecast and magnanimity combined, her Statesmen assented to a division of the territory into not less than three nor more than five States.

The census shows that Virginia, in addition to her slave population, supports, feeds and clothes more than twice as many free colored blacks as there are in all New England. Suppose she had retained the territory, she could have colonized it with blacks, bond or free, and relieved herself from their support. For Slavery in Virginia, as elsewhere in our Country, is a political necessity, presenting a question merely of political economy, in what manner the colored population can best be fed, clothed or supported, or managed with the most humanity.

This rich inheritance of which I have spoken, was then the gift of Virginia to the North, — Virginia, one of those Southern States that our northern fanatics would pursue "with fire-brands, arrows and death!"

Ever generous, ever disinterested Virginia! She has always been ready to make sacrifices for the public good, — for the common benefit. I have scarcely been within her borders, — I am but slightly acquainted

with any of her sons, but from childhood my heart has always expanded, reflecting upon her patriotic sacrifices, and her noble history.

Ever glorious Virginia! She has given to the world the model of a warrior, a statesman and a patriot. She has given to this Union statesmen whose disinterested devotion to the interests of our whole country, has never been surpassed, — has never been equalled in the annals of a world!

Her mighty dead arise, — arise in matchless array before me. Among her orators are GILES, RANDOLPH, WIRT and PATRICK HENRY. I see the mild, thoughtful, philosophic face of MADISON, — the bold, resolute, undaunted front of MONROE, — and JEFFERSON, his countenance lighted up with youthful enthusiasm, as when he first pledged his soul to the cause of his country. And above all and before all, the revered and dignified presence of him who was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” Sir, I was about to ask you if we have any quarrel with Virginia, but I will not put the question in that unworthy form; but, Sir, do you not feel, do you not recognise this Virginia of which I speak, as a part of your country? And is there any in this large assembly, so void of manliness, so lost to all patriotic emotion, as not to determine in his inmost mind that she shall never be other than a portion of his country?

And now, Sir, a few words as to aggressions upon the domestic and municipal concerns of the South. There is no instance on record, in which the South has interfered with our internal affairs; but, it is within my own knowledge and observation that for more than a quarter of a century, constant, continual attempts have been made by a portion of the North to carry the torch of the incendiary to the dwellings,—and the knife of the assassin to the throats of those who are of our common race and common blood, and who are living with us under the same political compact. Yes, a portion of the North, with head quarters in Massachusetts, has endeavored for more than a generation, to invite the blacks of Carolina to insurrection and revolt—to make them dissatisfied with their condition, by throwing among them pictorial representations of imaginary horrors, which should stir them up to assail their masters, and to destroy the hand that fed them. First they sent through the post office, and when that was properly checked—by white emissaries, and when that became dangerous, by black emissaries on board of our coasting vessels. And the doings of these fanatics, I say it with the deepest emotions of mournful regret, have had the sanction of our legislative assemblies.

Carolina was obliged to act on the defensive—to make provisions to guard against the torch of the incendiary lighted in Massachusetts, and more than one Legislative assembly of Massachusetts, knowing the whole merits of the controversy, or not knowing, most deplorably ignorant, was base enough to attempt to make quarrel with Carolina on this subject, and *had the* impertinence to authorize the sending a spy into the territory of a sovereign State with which we were in amity. Massachusetts has again and again proclaimed her sympathy with these fanatics and disturbers of the public peace, by sending numbers of them to the National Legislature. Again and again, I say it mournfully, has Massachusetts exhibited a want of disposition to preserve peace and harmony with the South. While the South, as a body has never made aggression upon us, or sought to interfere with our concerns—and has only sought a fair interchange of commercial commodities, and friendly courtesies.

Further, such has been the baseness of some that have found their way from Massachusetts to the councils of the nation, that they have imputed to South Carolina a want of Revolutionary patriotism. South Carolina can take care of herself at any time. But her revolutionary fame is a part of the history of our country—it belongs to me—I have a share in it—it is the common property of us all. I have examined with care the statistics of the Revolution. The South Carolina record is unimpeachable. With a territory then more than six times as large as Massachusetts,—with a small—a limited population—tenth in population—tenth in resources, among the then States of the confederacy, with this large territory to protect—she still contributed her full quota to the common cause in our Revolutionary struggle, and when that was over, she promptly ratified the Constitution! And she, too, at the suggestion of Congress, made liberal cession of lands to the Union. In the language of the act of cession, South Carolina, by her legislative Assembly, says, “the State is willing to make liberal cession to the United States, for the common benefit of the Union,” and to adopt every measure which can tend to promote the honor and dignity of the United States and strengthen their Federal Union! And this is the land, that our fanatics for years have sought to desolate—that our Northern demagogues now think it policy to defame.

The land of Middleton, of Laurens, and of Rutledge—she needs no defence! The birth place of Jackson—the land of Marion and Sumpter. Good God, Sir, she needs no defender.

But let me ask, the cavillers; if the North sent General Greene to Carolina—did not the South send Washington to Dorchester Heights? And would South Carolina have been so overrun, so persecuted by the enemies of our independence had it not been understood that she was eminently patriotic?

Sir, South Carolina and Virginia are not the only States, that have suffered from the constant warfare countenanced here. Our wretched fanatics, in some measure sustained by the vicious state of public sentiment here, are constantly sending their incendiary missiles, into those other Southern communities, with which we have solemn league and covenant—political alliance, friendly, commercial and domestic relations. Our brethren of the Southern States generally, have been ruthlessly pursued for years by a portion of the North—with the fierceness natural to bloodhounds—coupled with the fabled ferocity of demons. And for this conduct there is not the shadow of excuse. They have never interfered with us. And the blood of New England courses through the Union—there is not a Southern state where it does not freely run. The blood that flows in my veins,—bounds warmly through the veins of my kindred—in Louisiana—in Mississippi—and in Texas; and this warfare is upon our kindred.

Sir, in view of our revolutionary sufferings—our common prosperity—our common glory—our social compact—commercial intercourse—domestic relations and kindred ties,—In view of these, I proclaim, the conduct of a portion of the North, towards our Southern brethren—to be unfair and unmanly—ungenerous and ignoble!

Our people at the North appear to be the victims of a false philanthropy—at the same time, they appear to have a very imperfect idea of the nature of our government. They never seem to think that each State is a Sovereignty—having all the attributes of a State, except those they have voluntarily parted with to the General Government.

I do not wish to speak unkindly of our own State; “Massachusetts, with all thy faults I love thee still!” But my love of truth and my love of country are superior to all other considerations. You perceive what a noble territory Virginia has given to the Union. The government of your country has received towards its support, from lands ceded by Virginia, Georgia, South and North Carolina, immense sums which have gone to relieve you from debt and from burdens. Massachusetts owned large tracts in Maine, which she never ceded for the “common benefit,” but when Maine was made a State, she claimed her

proportion, and from it has not yet ceased to realize. I mention these facts, not to depreciate Massachusetts, but to do justice to the patriotism of the South. And if these United States were all in harmony, and there is now disaffection, let those tremble upon whom rests the dread responsibility of the present.

The people of Massachusetts, however, seem to think it is their business to guide and direct every part of the Union. If Massachusetts had had her way, and the direction of affairs, Louisiana never would have been acquired; we should have succumbed to England in the war of 1812; we should not have had Florida; Texas would have been lost to us; and California never gained!

But thanks to an ever patriotic democracy, the Union under our Constitution has prospered. Of the thirty-one States, is there any you could spare? Is there any one you would obliterate from the map? Would you yield anything we have achieved? Would the people of this country repeal anything that the Democracy have established? And is there any one candidly reflecting upon the leading measures advocated by and established by the Democracy during the last half century, can fail to see that its action has been judicious? Experience has shown our wisdom, — time confirmed our judgment.

Sir, I am aware of the vicious public sentiment that does prevail, and has prevailed in Massachusetts, most of the time since 1800. A vicious public sentiment, — a spirit of sectionalism, — before which our greatest and best have cowered; a spirit of sectionalism, to which to obtain and maintain position they have had to succumb; a spirit of sectionalism on which our demagogues have ridden to power. It is time to attempt to roll back the tide, lest it should go on increasing, and eventually overwhelm us in a common ruin.

Patriotism, in its enlarged sense, has in Massachusetts been long enough at a discount. Though unfashionable, it is a fire that forever lives in the hearts of the Democracy. And with me he is a Democrat, whatever other name he calls himself by, who stands by his country, the Union and the Constitution.

Of the great that are gone, as long as SAMUEL DEXTER and Mr. WEBSTER were supposed to be sectional, they commanded majorities; but the moment Mr. DEXTER left a faction, and went for his country, he was deserted. And Mr. WEBSTER, great as he unquestionably was, in Massachusetts, was deserted by a portion of his former supporters, and was by them vilified, sacrificed and proscribed the moment he pro-

claimed he had a country. Of our distinguished living statesmen, Mr. CHOATE has been deserted by a portion of his party, ever since he complimented the Democracy on the "odor of their nationality," at Worcester. He has never been forgiven by them for considering patriotism a virtue. And Mr. Winthrop has never received the full support of his party, since he uttered in Faneuil Hall, the patriotic sentiment, "Our Country, however bounded."

I come now to speak more particularly of the value of the Union. Many affect to consider this a light matter. Its importance, its vital consequence, in my opinion cannot be too often presented. I have had occasion to remark before, and I now say that there is no State in the Union to which Union is more important than to the State of Massachusetts, and no State that from the Union has received so many advantages. I have not time to go into much of detail. But by means of our internal commerce, by the market for our manufacturing products, which the Southern States have afforded, by the occupations which they have given we have been prospered almost beyond belief.* Where rivers flowed sluggishly along, where proprietors were almost ready to abandon our lands, in despair—villages—towns, aye, cities have sprung up, enriched by the opportunities which under our Constitution we have been enabled to enjoy, and without which we should have been subject to such annoyances, that our citizens would gladly have emigrated to lands more fertile, and sterile farms would have been deserted. Sir, I do not believe that it is in the power of the ungrateful among us to overthrow the social compact under which we live. Fear, Sir, is not one of my attributes. I have still an abiding confidence in the people of this country; the vandal spirit of puritanism and the tiger spirit of fanaticism may for a time have their course in the moral and political world, but in the run intelligence and sagacity shall conquer. But, Sir, another question comes up, how long can inharmonious relations exist without producing violence. How long are traitorous agitators—disturbers of the public peace to be borne with? A continual dropping will wear away stones. And I, for one, would rather fight than be forever subject to the despotism of fanaticism. I know there are those who think they can go on in a spirit of hostility to the South, without danger to

* It is a most singular thing as marking conspicuously the ungrateful spirit of a portion of our people, that the largest votes given against the Union party of our country come from those localities which have received the most benefit from commerce with the South, and without which those localities would be necessarily depopulated. Abington, Lynn, Danvers, and the towns engaged in the leather trade generally, illustrate this assertion!

the Union ; but, Sir, in the language of Mr. Jefferson, without harmony and affection liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. And what value is Union, unless there be a different spirit exhibited from that now prevalent ? An honorable Senator of the United States, from South Carolina, in the goodness of his heart, expressed the humane hope that if we could not exist peaceably together that we might have sense enough peaceably to part. A humane hope but a vain imagination. There can be no such thing. The same madness that would dissolve the Union would drench the country in blood.

There is nothing in the history of nations, in the past history of the world, that will warrant the supposition that our Union can go down without a struggle, or without an array of one party against another, bringing—producing a bloody conflict in which the Union will be more fully established by the patriotic, the sagacious, and the wise, or the whole hopes of man crushed by a willing surrender to despotism. I have no fear of the result of such a contest—there are sound heads and patriotic hands that will see the Republic safe. Still, if the madness of the present hour continue—if the madness of the present hour increase and prevail ; a contest for the continuance, the permanency of the Union must sooner or later come. If for that there is to be a contest,—God, to whom I am every day grateful,—Great God, ever bountiful to me, grant that such contest come in my day—before this eye shall be dim—before this arm shall be nerveless. I wish to leave no such contest a legacy to my children. If such a contest is to be, I wish to be in that fight, and to help settle that question, so that those who come after may dwell in peace and happiness.

Not Sir, but what I have full confidence in that boy at home. I have no fear but that he will tread a career of unfaltering patriotism. I have already put him on the road. He is barely six years of age. Already he has raised his right hand before the shades of Washington and Jackson, and I have sworn him to devotion to his *whole country*. Not that country, which in the limited vision and narrow range of some is bounded by Taunton and Groton—not that contained in Massachusetts,—not that comprised in the number of square miles that constitute New England—but, the United States of America is his country—wherever the flag of our Union waves there is his country. And if he have not already in his young bosom—room—range enough for that whole country—he is no true son of mine.

But, Sir, to the disorganizers—to the disturbers of the public peace—to the wolves in sheep's clothing—to those in New England with

whom treachery to their neighbor, and treason to their country is a daily thought and a nightly dream, I say, beware. The priests and the demagogues who are sowing the wind—may reap the whirlwind. To those who seek to cover themselves, in their impertinent interference in the affairs of the South, with the mantle of religion; I say I too have diligently read the Scriptures—their deep and pure morality I acknowledge, and trust it is engraven on my heart—but I can find no warrant for their conduct—in the recorded opinions—in the generous sentiments—in the sublime teachings of the great founder of Christianity. Let these beware, there will be a time when the delusion even here—will pass away. And when that time comes, the reaction will be powerful. There is patriotism enough at the North to save New England. Provoke not too far—there is such a thing as reaction and retribution for the ungrateful spirit that is now rife. If retribution come not until you have excited a civil or servile war, it will then come in terror and in storm. The longer delayed the more terrific. A just Nemesis may overtake you, and if she come—she shall come—she will come—not only with the point of Achilles, but, with the tread and crush of the Titan!

And now let me briefly call attention to the sentiments of some that are gone.

You have a vivid picture of the benefits that would accrue from Union, in the prophecies of MADISON before the adoption of our Constitution,—prophecies now reality. His master mind portrayed with equal vigor the evils that would flow from dissolution—standing armies—a police at every cross-road—soldiers billeted upon you—a distracted people—with broken ties, and desolated homes—life accompanied by all the dark catalogue of human misfortunes, of human errors and human crimes. Look around,—view our prosperity, and then ask yourselves what might have been, had we not been shielded by our glorious Constitution.

You have the patriotic warnings of WASHINGTON—which should be familiar to you all—the patriotic counsels of JACKSON, into which he poured his soul; and among our own Statesmen, there is one who tells you in his Inaugural, that your Constitution “has promoted the lasting welfare of your country,” and that “a dissolution of the Union would overthrow all the enjoyments of our present lot, and all our earthly hopes of the future.” Emphatically he says “the Union is the Ark of our salvation.” These are sentiments which cannot be too often presented, or too strongly impressed. These are the sentiments of the great, the wise, the patriotic and the trusted of the past.

Let us all stand by our country—let our Constitution be sacredly maintained—let the love of Union be forever impressed—“*Know not sectional or geographical distinctions*”—consider the welfare of each as your own, and if you in some respects are more favored, look not with the less favor upon those who you think are struggling under disadvantages from which you are happily free. Above all, cultivate harmonious relations, and avoid subjects of contention with all members of our confederacy,—consider the distant child of yesterday as much entitled to your regard and affection, as any that is older or nearer,—live and let live,—there is room enough in this country for all, to the thousandth generation.

Have no sympathy,—no alliance with those who have no loyalty to the Constitution,—no sympathy, no alliance with those who have in all emergencies been found against their country. Make your country the subject of your “veneration and love,”—think how we have been prospered,—how many blessings we have enjoyed under the Constitution as it is. Let your last thought when you sink to peaceful and refreshing slumber, be of your country; let it be your first thought at early dawn, when you first awake to the grateful light of morning. Ever have within your hearts a sentiment of thankfulness, that God has cast your lines in pleasant places,—that he has permitted you to live in and to enjoy such a country.

These sentiments—these principles have a powerful response from the soul of patriotism, in the shades of Mount Vernon,—the breeze that bears the echo carries them to Ashland and to Marshfield,—to Monticello and the Hermitage,—where great, where mighty, where patriotic hearts repose.

Rally, then, round the flag of your country,—that flag with the thirty-one stars—the flag of our country—of the Union,—which floated triumphantly over Jackson at New Orleans,—that Perry bore in his wave tossed boat at Erie,—which Hull, and Decatur, and Stewart, and Bainbridge immortalized, when they taught proud England that she was no longer the mistress of the ocean,—the flag that waved to the rejoicing breeze over Taylor, at Buena Vista,—that Scott bore with glory to the gates of Mexico. That flag is in the hands of the Democracy,—under that sign we shall conquer.

“Long, long may it wave,
O’er the land of the free—
O’er the home of the brave!”

At least, let it not be tarnished during our generation!

✓ Austin Arthur W.

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